

CROSS EXPLORATIONS®: THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS THE APOSTLES		
LESSON	TITLE/SCRIPTURE	KEY POINT
1	God Sends the Holy Spirit Acts 2:1–21	At Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to His Church. Through Word and Sacrament, God gives us His Holy Spirit to create and sustain saving faith in Jesus.
2	Peter and John Heal the Lame Man Acts 3	We are all lame beggars before God. Through the Means of Grace—God’s Word and Sacraments—God gives us faith to believe in Jesus as our Savior and grants us forgiveness, the cure for all sin.
3	God’s Servant Stephen Acts 6–7	We are crushed and enraged at the accusations of God’s Law, but the Gospel brings peace and quietness. In church, the pastor speaks the same Word of God as Stephen speaks in Acts 7:60, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them,” and gives us peace through the Words of the Absolution, “for His sake [God] forgives you all your sins.”
4	Philip and the Ethiopian Acts 8:26–40	As He came to the Ethiopian, our Lord comes to us in our weakness, for we cannot by our own reason or strength come to Him. Through the Means of Grace, the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies us, keeping us with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.
5	The Conversion of Paul Acts 9:1–31	Through the Law, we are crushed by the weight of our sin, and like Paul, we are enemies of God, unable to save ourselves. As God revived Paul through Ananias, He revives us through the proclamation of His Word and the administration of His Sacraments, granting forgiveness, life, and salvation to all who believe.
6	Dorcas Acts 9:36–43	In the life of Dorcas, we see that God leads us to do good works that glorify Him and point others to the saving light of Christ!
7	Peter and Cornelius Acts 10	In church, we receive the Good News that, although we are judged unrighteous and deserving of death, God mercifully declares us holy, righteous, and innocent because of Christ and His work.
8	Peter’s Escape from Prison Acts 12	Like Peter, we may suffer because of the sins of others, but God’s will is always done. His Word is never proclaimed in vain, but breaks the chains of sin that bind people and sets them free.
9	Paul’s First Missionary Journey Acts 13–14	Just as God sent Paul and Barnabas to spread the Gospel, so today He sends pastors and missionaries to preach the Gospel, baptize, and administer the Lord’s Supper in mission fields around the world.
10	Paul and Timothy Acts 15:1–16:5	Human reason believes, as many did in Paul’s day, that we must do something to be saved. Yet the answer is always Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus, whose resurrection from the dead sealed our salvation and absolved the world.
11	Lydia Acts 16:11–15	Just as God worked His miracle beside the river, clothing Lydia with Christ in Baptism, so God works His miracles in pulpits and fonts around the world, destroying the work of Satan by washing away sins in water combined with God’s Word and clothing believers with His righteousness.
12	Paul and Silas in Prison Acts 16:16–40	Just as God opened the prison, granting Paul and Silas freedom and new life, so Christ by His crucifixion and resurrection frees us from the prison of our sins and grants us life eternal.
13	Paul Sails for Rome Acts 27	As Christ was with Paul and his companions in a perilous sea voyage, so He is with us, holding us up, keeping us with Him in the ship of the Church, and casting all our sins into the depths of the sea.



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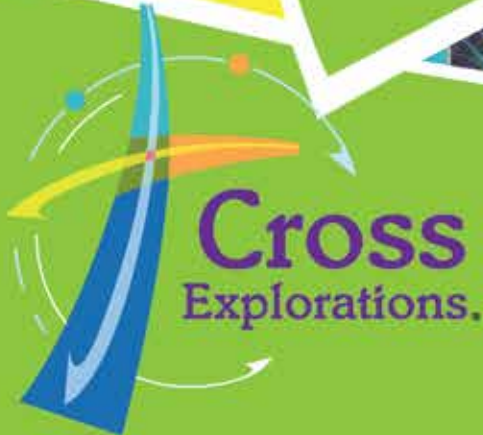
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Level
2

The Holy Spirit Leads the Apostles

NEW TESTAMENT 5

EXPLORE



Teacher Leaflets
Grades 4–6

Paul's Journeys



Direct the students to the back of the leaflet. Remind them of the many ways in which God has revealed Himself to His people.

God Himself Is Present

Review the Bible texts, and challenge the students to connect the text boxes with the correct illustrations, using a pencil or marker. The correct responses are (1) burning bush, (2) open Bible, (3) pillar of fire, (4) Jesus on the cross, (5) bread and chalice, (6) tongs holding hot coal, (7) apostles with fire on their heads, (8) baptismal shell.

If you have time, examine Ephesians 2:1–10. Find out how the Holy Spirit alone works faith in us.

Say

The Holy Spirit calls each of us through the Gospel and gathers us into His Church. He enlightens us by giving us the saving knowledge of Jesus and faith in Him in a process we call sanctification. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us, or makes us holy in God’s sight. As sinful people, we think that faith begins with us. We think we should understand God and trust Him through our own efforts. We think we can do good works and please God on our own. But it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us through God’s gifts of Word and Sacrament that we are able to do anything good. He deserves all of the credit.

Direct the students to Ephesians 2 in their Bibles. Read aloud, or have volunteers read aloud, verses 1–10, one verse at a time. After each verse, elaborate with the following information.

Verse 1: Without the Spirit, we are dead to God, unable to respond in any spiritual way.

Verse 2: Without the Spirit, we are alive to sin and the “prince of the power of the air”—Satan.

Verse 3: Sinful people pursue every sinful desire, incurring God’s wrath.

Verse 4: God loves us, even when we sin. That’s truly great love!

Verse 5: By His grace, He makes us alive with Christ—that’s the Holy Spirit at work.

Verse 6: Now raised to life spiritually, we join Christ in heavenly places; that is, we are now part of God’s heavenly kingdom, even while we live the rest of our lives on the earth.

Verse 7: In the future, God will show us even more of His grace.

Verse 8: Our salvation is God’s gift, not something we do, no matter how good we are.

Verse 9: No one can boast in God’s presence, because we did nothing to get there.

Verse 10: God is at work in us, moving us to live as His children. The good things we try to do are flawed by sin but acceptable to God because of our faith.

Preparing the Lesson

God Sends the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1–21

Date of Use



Key Point

At Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to His Church. Through Word and Sacrament, God gives us His Holy Spirit to create and sustain saving faith in Jesus.

Law/Gospel

I sin when I believe that I can understand and trust in God on my own. **By the power and work of the Holy Spirit through His Word, the Spirit grants me faith in Jesus and empowers me to will and do that which is good and God pleasing.**

Context

Pentecost, which means “fiftieth,” occurred fifty days after Jesus’ glorious resurrection on Easter. Forty days after He rose again, Jesus ascended to God’s right hand, and now, ten days later, He fulfills His promise to send the Holy Spirit, who will “bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26).

Commentary

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit introduces Himself in “a mighty rushing wind” (v. 2) and “divided tongues as of fire” (v. 3). However, Acts 2:11 reveals the great miracle of Pentecost. Those who hear the apostles say, “We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter stands and proclaims God’s mighty works of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Peter cites Joel 2:28–32 as his sermon text, and then he proclaims that Joel’s prophecy is fulfilled on Pentecost. Peter’s sermon draws our attention to Jesus Christ and His suffering, dying, and rising. The Holy Spirit comes to us and works through the preaching of Christ and Him crucified and risen for the forgiveness of our sins.

The coming of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel also reverse the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9). In Genesis 11, the people of the world had one language, but they arrogantly sought to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). As a consequence, God confused their language and dispersed them (Genesis 11:7–8).

The coming of the Holy Spirit reverses God’s judgment at Babel. While people around the world may still speak different languages, the Holy Spirit unites them in the Gospel—that is, the preaching of Christ crucified and risen.

In John 14:23–31, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to His disciples as He gets ready to suffer, die, rise again, and then leave them. Jesus talks about demonstrating our love for Him by keeping His Word (John 14:23). He promises the Holy Spirit, “whom the Father will send in My name” (John 14:26). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all work together as one to give comfort and peace in the message of the Gospel (John 14:27).

When Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit, He explains the Holy Spirit’s “job description” as well: “He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). Jesus also said, “[The Holy Spirit] will bear witness about Me” (John 15:26), and “[The Holy Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14). The Holy Spirit comes not through uncertain dreams, visions, or feelings, but through the certain and comforting message of peace and forgiveness of sins won by Jesus Christ.

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.



Painting by Robert Hunt © CPH

Start

Get Ready

Read Acts 2:1–21; review the Key Point and Law/Gospel Points.

Read **Preparing the Lesson**.

Review and adapt the activities suggested in this leaflet to suit your students and the time you have available.

Pray that God blesses the students through His Word.

Bible Memory Verse

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.
Matthew 28:19

Bring to class a floating candle and lighter (or a plain candle and a small bowl of water). Mention that both flame and water are associated with God's gift of the Holy Spirit. Flame is mentioned in connection with the Holy Spirit in Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; Acts 2:2–4; and 2 Timothy 1:6. The water is a reminder of the Sacrament of Baptism, in which the Holy Spirit, through water combined with God's Word, works faith in the baptized individual.

Ask

What qualities of fire and water make them appropriate symbols of the Holy Spirit? Fire or intense heat is used to sterilize surgical instruments and to refine ore into precious metal; it spreads rapidly. Water is used for cleansing; it fosters growth and life in all living things. Encourage the students to watch for ways these symbols are featured in today's lesson.

Distribute Student Leaflet 1. Read, or have a student volunteer read, the introduction on page 1 of the student leaflet.

Read

Direct the students to the inside of the leaflet and provide these instructions.

Say

What promise did Jesus make to the disciples before He ascended? He promised to send the Holy Spirit. **How long did the disciples wait in Jerusalem for this promise to be fulfilled?** Ten days; the ascension took place forty days after Easter, and Pentecost was fifty days after Easter.

Invite students to study the text printed around the globe. Ask if anyone can read the Bible verses printed there or recognize any specific words. (The same text—Acts 2:38—is printed in German, French, Swahili, English, and Spanish.)

Read aloud, or have volunteers read aloud, Acts 2:1–21.

Ask

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He was baptized by John. In what form did the Holy Spirit appear at Jesus' Baptism? He appeared in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:16). **On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were baptized with the Holy Spirit. In what form did the Holy Spirit appear at Pentecost?** He appeared as wind and fire, both of which are Old Testament symbols of God's presence.

Say

People from all over the world (Acts 2:9–11) who were in Jerusalem for the Pentecost festival were able to hear and understand the disciples' message in their own language. God wants everyone to hear the Good

News. Peter says in his sermon that "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v. 21). The disciples' new work had just begun. We often refer to this first Pentecost as the birth of the Christian Church.

Read, or have volunteers read, Acts 2:22–24; 36–41. Focus on the central teaching of Peter's sermon.

Ask

How were Peter's listeners able to be saved from their sins, according to verse 38? Peter tells them to repent and be baptized so that they might receive the Holy Spirit. We know that the Holy Spirit, working through God's Word and Sacraments, works faith in Jesus as our Savior from sin. Jesus died for the sins of all people, even those who crucified Him. **How did God bless Peter's proclamation of the Gospel (v. 41)?** Three thousand souls were added to the Kingdom through Baptism that day.

Look

Say

The story of the New Testament Pentecost took place ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, or fifty days after Easter. Pentecost was also an Old Testament festival called the Feast of Weeks.

Invite volunteers to read aloud from the "Look" section as the other students follow along in their leaflets. Invite students to point out information in the article that is new to them. Pay special attention to the connections of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

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At Home

Briefly point out the "At Home" section of the Student Leaflet and encourage the students to share the leaflet and what they have learned in this lesson with their families, especially the questions printed there.

The Miracle of Mercy

Say

Sometimes, we read about people in the Bible, like Peter, and think they are perfect people. Yet Peter's time with Jesus showed both his good and bad traits. Trace Peter's discipleship by reviewing the eleven events listed on your leaflet.

Allow students to read the Scripture texts and make notes; then review their answers.

Luke 5:1–10—obedient, frightened, sinful

Matthew 14:22–30—eager, arrogant, doubting, afraid

Matthew 16:13–23—confident, bold, arrogant, unhelpful

Matthew 17:1–8—frightened, eager to please, terrified

John 13:1–9—proud, defiant, impetuous

Matthew 26:33–35—proud, boastful

John 18:2–10—violent, protective, impulsive

Matthew 26:69–75—belligerent, remorseful

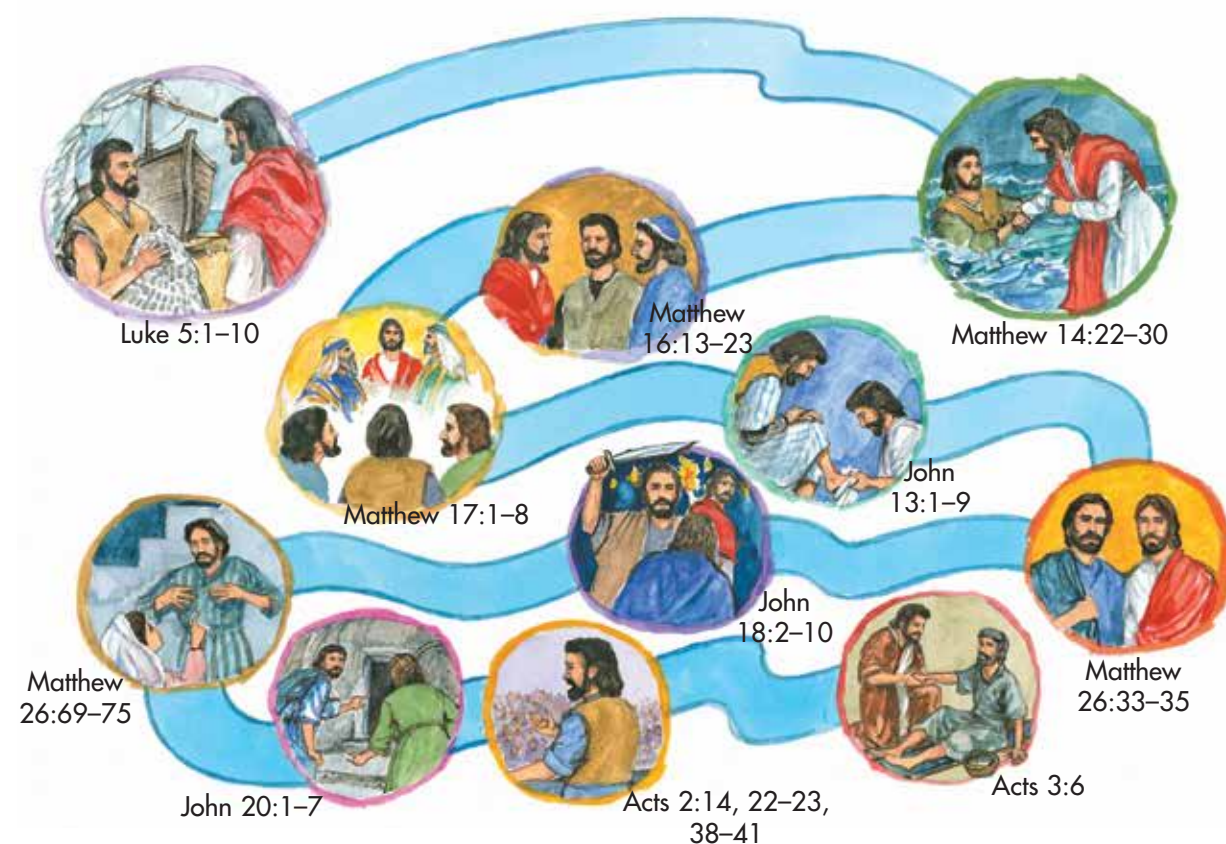
John 20:1–7—doubtful, eager, uncertain

Acts 2:14, 22–23, 38–41—bold, forthright, persuasive

Acts 3:6—generous, merciful, faithful

Ask

Was Peter a perfect person? No, he had some strong points but also many faults. Was God able to use Peter? Yes. What did God accomplish through Peter? Peter became a bold preacher after Pentecost; his sermons brought thousands of people to faith. How can Peter's experience apply in your life? Even though we are imperfect people, God is able to use us to accomplish His purposes.



Preparing the Lesson

Peter and John Heal the Lame Man

Acts 3

Date of Use



Key Point

We are all lame beggars before God. Through the Means of Grace—God's Word and Sacraments—God gives us faith to believe in Jesus as our Savior and grants us forgiveness, the cure for all sin.

Law/Gospel

Disability and illness are physical symptoms of sin in the world. **Through His Son, God gives me forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation—the cure for all sin.**

Context

In the days following Christ's ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples remained in Jerusalem, making daily visits to the temple for prayer and to share the message of Christ with those who were there.

Commentary

As Peter and John were going to the temple, they encountered a lame man begging for alms at the gate of the temple. Alms are money or food for the poor; more generally, however, alms are acts of mercy. The lame man, therefore, though he had in mind money or food, was asking in a general way for an act of mercy.

When Peter and John heard this man's cry for mercy, they responded with the only mercy worth giving, the only mercy they had. They gave him the power of God unto salvation. They preached Christ and Him crucified.

Thus, just as the paralytic was healed so that we may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins (Matthew 9:1–7), likewise this lame beggar was healed, receiving from Peter and John God's own gift: mercy.

The church is a mercy place. It inhales God's mercy in Christ's death and resurrection through Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, the Lord's Supper, and even the sermon. It exhales that selfsame mercy in love and service to one's neighbor.

Before God, we are all lame beggars. On account of sin, our plea before God cannot be for justice, equity, or fair treatment by the Law. To ask for that is simply to ask for hell.

Our plea, like that of the lame man, is a cry for mercy. Our plea is a cry for undeserved love on account of Christ's death and resurrection. Through the Means of Grace—through God's Word preached and His Sacraments administered—we receive God's mercy. Through those means, God bestows on us what Christ accomplished on the cross two thousand years ago—the forgiveness of our sin. "For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation" (Small Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar). On account of this, we are once again able to stand before God.

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/ podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.



Painting by Greg Copeland © CPH

Start

Get Ready

Read Acts 3; review the Key Point and Law/Gospel Points.

Preparing the Lesson.

Review and adapt the activities suggested in this leaflet to suit your students and the time you have available.

Pray that God blesses the students through His Word.

Bible Memory Verse

There is no other name . . . by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

Ask

If you were sick and had to go to the doctor, what are some questions he or she might ask you? Where does it hurt? How long have you felt like this? Other similar questions. What tests or instruments might the doctor use? Thermometer, blood pressure cuff, blood tests, and so forth

Say

Medical personnel have extensive training so that they use appropriate means of diagnosis and treatment for our medical problems. It's comforting to know we have that help when we are sick. All people—you and I included—are sick with a very deadly disease. Our illness is sin. We inherited it from our parents, who got it from theirs, who

got it from theirs, all the way back to the first people on earth, Adam and Eve. Medicines and bandages won't cure sin-sickness. We may try to cover it up with bandages like good behavior and Sunday clothes, but the only cure for sin is the forgiveness accomplished by Jesus' death on the cross, which we receive as a free gift from God.

Today's lesson is about a man who was lame. That means he couldn't walk. He spent his days begging for money at the temple gate. One day, he encountered two of Jesus' disciples. They didn't give the man what he asked for; they gave him much more.

Distribute Student Leaflet 2. Read, or have a student volunteer read, the introduction on page 1.

Read

Say

In Acts 3, Peter and John healed a man who had been lame since birth. Imagine the man's surprise when Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" Peter helped him up, and he was walking and leaping.

On the lines in your leaflet, write a conversation that this man may have had with his friend, explaining how he was healed. You may wish to work with a partner and read your conversation to the class.

After volunteers have shared their dialogues, discuss these questions.

Ask

Why was this man lame? He was born lame. What did the lame man expect to receive from Peter and John? He expected alms, a gift of money or other act of mercy. Begging was the only way a lame person could earn a living at that time. Because he was born lame, he had no reason to expect healing. Instead of money, what did the man receive? Peter and John gave the only gift that they had to give—the

power of God to save him. He received both physical and spiritual healing. He could stand before God in His holy temple.

How was the lame man healed? Peter and John said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" (v. 6b). The disciples were instruments of God, using the authority He gave them to do His work. How did the man respond? He began walking, leaping, and praising God. How did the other people in the temple respond? They were amazed when they recognized that the man who had been lame was now walking and leaping. They were ready to hear what Peter would say to them.

Say

We are all lame beggars before God. We don't deserve to be His people. We must beg for mercy. We need God's undeserved love on account of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. God loves us and shows His love through the Means of Grace—God's Word and Sacraments. He does so by bestowing on us what Christ accomplished on the cross—forgiveness of sins.

Look

Review the information about the structure of the temple with the students to help them understand the setting for today's Bible account.

The account of Peter and John healing the lame man (Acts 3) mentions two specific locations within the grounds of the temple in Jerusalem: the Beautiful Gate (vv. 2, 10) and "the portico called Solomon's" (v. 11).

Review the temple description in the student leaflet, encouraging the students to write the name of each part of the temple on the appropriate line.

At Home

Briefly point out the "At Home" section of the leaflet and encourage the students to share the leaflet and what they have learned in this lesson with their families, especially the questions printed.

